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## **FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2007**

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**HON. DAVID R. OBEY  
OF WISCONSIN  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
DECEMBER 8, 2006**

Mr. Speaker, this resolution tonight is a blatant admission of abject failure by the most useless Congress in modern times. That we do not have a budget before us is certainly not the fault of the gentleman from California, the distinguished chairman of the committee.

This House passed every single

appropriation bill except the Labor-Health appropriation bill, before the July 4 recess.

The problem is that the budget resolution which defined what would be contained in those appropriation bills was so wildly unrealistic that moderate Republicans in this House rebelled and would not, for instance, agree to support the budget resolution until a promise was made that \$3 billion in additional funding would be found in order to correct some

of the shortfalls in education and health and worker protection programs.

In addition, as the gentleman from California has said, when these bills went over to the other end of the Capitol, the United States Senate, they ran into the decision of the Republican majority leader to avoid having the Senate take votes on any controversial issues in the domestic portion of the budget.

As a result, we are here tonight with not a single dollar having been appropriated to any government program that has anything whatsoever to do with the domestic operations of this government. That is a disgraceful performance. And so we are left with the choice of passing this continuing resolution or having the government shut down.

I want to contrast that with the

condition that we left the government in when the Democrats lost the majority in 1994. In 1994 I was chairman of the Appropriations Committee and when we lost the election, we had still managed to complete every single appropriation before the end of the fiscal year. We did that because we had reached a bipartisan agreement between the then-majority Democrats and the then-minority Republicans on the allocation of appropriated dollars to each of the subcommittees. And it was that bipartisan cooperation

which allowed us to pass every single bill in the allotted time.

Now we are here with Governors unable to plan, State legislatures unable to plan, mayors being unable to plan, families being unable to plan, because they do not know what the final disposition of the entire domestic budget is going to be.

And so now the Congress is going

to leave town and when the Democrats assume control next January, we are going to have to pass 2 years of appropriation bills in 1 year. We will do our best to do that; but I must say to my majority party friends that I think that by this act of abdication, they have given up any right to criticize in any way whatever devices we have to use in order to dispose of the unfinished business of this Congress come next January.

We will do our best, but we have



very few decent options. And I find it ironic, as the gentleman from California at least obliquely referenced, I find it ironic that the Senate majority leader found time to publicly diagnose Terri Schiavo's case from the Senate floor. I find it ironic that the majority leader in the Senate found the time to insert 40 pages of language into the defense bill last year indemnifying the entire pharmaceutical industry. He insisted on having that language inserted, although it had never been cleared by anyone in the

conference and the conference had already finished its work before that was inserted. So he had plenty of time to do that, but he didn't manage to find the time to schedule the appropriation bills on the Senate floor, and as a result, we are here with this mess tonight.

The most fundamental obligation of the Congress under the Constitution of the United States is to decide what activities the government needs to engage in

and to provide the financing for those activities. That is the purpose of appropriation bills. And when the Congress fails to pass that legislation, it fails in its principal obligation to the taxpayers.

So I simply want to say that Senator *Byrd* and I expect to have an announcement next week on how we will attempt to deal with the leftovers from this congressional session.

But I would simply ask one thing of my friends on the majority side of the aisle: Please spare me. Don't have the gall to go to the American public 2 years from now and ask once again to be put in charge of handling the Nation's budget when the decision has been made at the highest levels of the Republican Party tonight to walk away from our collective responsibility to pass this legislation before we adjourn.

The President is entitled to have his new budget considered anew. He is entitled to have the decks wiped clean so that he can start fresh; and with all due respect, I think we are also entitled to be able to start fresh so that come January, we can consider the President's new budget and not have to turn to last year's problems. We are not going to be given that opportunity, and the President isn't going to be given that opportunity. That is a shame. But at this point we have no choice but to support this

resolution.

I do want to say one thing. Speaking of unfinished business, I am pleased to see that this resolution at this point does contain the suspension of the congressional COLA until such time as the minimum wage is increased. I know the distinguished minority leader, Ms. *Pelosi*

, had asked that that be done. This resolution does not complete the linkage, but it does suspend that

COLA until February 17, I believe the date is, which gives us an opportunity to pass the minimum wage bill in January before it goes into effect. I hope we meet that obligation so that we can see to it that as Congress receives its COLA, the lowest-paid workers in this country also get a benefit.

